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By: DAVID LEVINSKY

Burlington County Times - September 23, 2009

The Burlington County Sheriff's Department has received a federal grant to help pay for gang suppression efforts.

The \$32,400 award was announced Tuesday by U.S. Rep. John Adler, D-3rd of Cherry Hill, who supported the grant application.

County Sheriff Jean Stanfield said the money likely would be used for police mentoring programs intended to curtail gang recruitment.

"Keeping our communities safe has to be a top priority," Adler said in a statement. "This grant will help local police departments save jobs, keep our police on the streets and protect our families."

The grant is the second the county has received in recent years from the federal government to combat gang activity. In 2007 the sheriff's department, Prosecutor Robert Bernardi and the Burlington County Police Chiefs Association were awarded \$542,163 to fund gang enforcement and prevention programs.

The money was used to purchase a computer software system that allows the Burlington County Prosecutor's Office and local police departments to share information about gang activities. It also was used for special police patrols and enforcement actions in key areas of the county, such as the River Line light rail.

Stanfield said officers from the sheriff's department, NJ Transit and 11 riverfront towns have teamed to conduct two special patrols on the Camden-to-Trenton line so far.

She said her department has applied for another federal grant specifically to fund that effort. Adler wrote a letter to the Justice Department in May supporting the application.

"With high crime rates and significant gang presence in the major cities along the River Line, it is crucial that proactive law enforcement operations be conducted to deter and prevent violent crime," Adler said in the letter.